

WSPTA Testimony on SSB 5437 Senate Ways and Means, February 28th

Good afternoon Madam Chair and members of the Committee.

For the record I'm Michelle Rylands, and I'm here today representing Washington State PTA, the state's oldest and largest child advocacy organization, with more than 133,000 members statewide.

I live in the 31st legislative district, am a parent of 2 school aged boys and have been an ECEAP substitute teacher for the last 2 years.

Last fall, Washington State PTA adopted a position to support legislation that expands high-quality early learning programs to all preschool-age children and that addresses the equity gaps in access. This bill is a good step forward.

As an ECEAP instructor, my class consists of many unique types of children.

- Children whose first language is not English,
- Children who are being raised by alternate family members,
- children living in shelters or are homeless just to name a few.

And although my classroom is always changing, one thing remains the same: High quality early learning programs set all children on a path to success in education.

The programs ready our students to go on to kindergarten prepared not only intellectually but, most importantly, socially. Currently long waiting lists, always changing qualifications, and cost, limit expanding access to all preschool aged children.

Please support and pass substitute Senate Bill 5437. We know this investment works.

An expansion of the early learning program now will pay dividends in the future. Thank you.